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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN COURT CONVICTS EDITOR BUT SUSPENDS JAIL
SENTENCE

REF: A. 07 CAIRO 2825
[B](#). 07 CAIRO 2936
[C](#). 07 CAIRO 3133

[1](#)1. (SBU) On March 26, a Cairo court convicted Ibrahim Eissa, editor of the independent newspaper Al-Dustour, of spreading false information in connection with the newspaper's August 2007 publication of stories reporting rumors then circulating that President Mubarak was in poor health. The court sentenced Eissa to 6 months in prison, but suspended the sentence and, at least for now, he will not be jailed. Several similar lawsuits and Eissa's appeal of a previous conviction, also resulting in a jail sentence, remain pending. The jail sentence in this case could be enforced if Eissa is convicted in any of the other pending cases or loses his appeal of the earlier conviction. The court also fined Eissa LE 200 (about \$36).

[1](#)2. (SBU) Lawyers from Eissa's defense team immediately announced that they will appeal the conviction. In a written statement, Gamal Eid of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information and a lawyer for Eissa, labeled the verdict further evidence of the Egyptian Government's lack of respect for freedom of the press and intolerance of criticism. In the statement, Eid also said the suspension of the prison sentence was a "compromise" because imprisoning Eissa would be "a big scandal."

3.(SBU) Comment: The conviction, with a minimal fine and suspension of the prison sentence, may well have been a compromise. The GOE is fully-aware of the international attention Eissa's legal difficulties have attracted. By convicting him, but not immediately enforcing the sentence while maintaining the ability to do so in the future, the court may be trying to avoid international criticism while sending a message to Eissa and other journalists.
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